



**HONOLULU CITY COUNCIL**

Wednesday, May 10, 2017, 10:30 A.M.

(Testimony is 2 pages long)

**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF BILL 42**

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Aloha Chair Menor and members of the City Council:

Most of the public discourse over the rail project over the past decade plus has focused solely on the capital costs of the project. Very little discourse over the benefits of the project or the costs of not building the project.

Honolulu's public transit system has been at-capacity since the early 1980's. Honolulu's narrow geography squeezes a large number of buses and bus routes onto very few major east-west thoroughfares. For example, the bus stop across the street from this building on King Street and Punchbowl serves 41 different bus routes alone. This has created a phenomenon commonly typically referred to "bus bunching" in which buses tend to clump together and slow each other down. It's not that OTS couldn't add more buses. It's that every bus added to the system makes the bunching problem worse, reducing average travel speeds, reducing system reliability and increasing operating costs.

The lack of investment in alternative modes of transportation and the failure to increase transit capacity for more than three decades has significantly reduced mobility for Honolulu residents who are unable to drive and have forced an increasing number of Honolulu residents to own cars, placing a significant cost burden on Honolulu's low income households.

Nearly 40% of Oahu residents currently do not have driver's licenses. The average cost of owning and driving a car in Hawaii are more than \$10,000 per year. Today approximately 17% of Oahu residents are over 65 and this number is projected to significantly rise to around 25% by 2030.

The costs of building the rail system are certainly significant and it is incumbent upon the City and HART to diligently manage costs in order to reduce the burden on Honolulu taxpayers as much as possible. I do not doubt that many rail opponents are genuinely concerned about the cost burdens placed on our low-income households and Kupuna.

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However, it is critical that policy makers understand and take into account the costs of not building rail. How many of our low-income residents and seniors are suffering from poor mobility today? How many of our residents are working second jobs today just to pay for their car?

Blue Planet Foundation encourages the City Council to identify the funding necessary to complete the rail system to Ala Moana Center. Furthermore, Blue Planet Foundation encourages the City Council and City Administration to develop a more aggressive vision for sustainable transportation in Honolulu.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.